

Scheduled Tribe Students in Schools of Odisha

An Analysis through Statistical Spectacles

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Abstract

Tribes comprise approximately 8.6 per cent of the total population of the country, which probably has the largest number of tribal communities in the world. India, being a classic homeland of Scheduled Tribes, offers a sound human laboratory for conducting a number of researches. The diverse issues of Scheduled Tribes, in general, and their educational development in particular, received wide attention among researchers for a long time because time has shown that education is an inevitable force for the holistic development of people and nation. Odisha occupies a prominent space on the tribal map of India as it consists of a variety of Scheduled Tribe communities. The greatest challenge before the state is to mainstream the socially excluded group like Scheduled Tribe population. A close analysis reveals that literacy and enrolment of tribal children are quite low and considerably lower than the other categories. An attempt has been taken in the first part of this paper to study the sex ratio, overall literacy and gender gap in the literacy rate of Scheduled Tribe population of Odisha. The second part highlights the school education status of Scheduled Tribe children in terms of enrolment, gross enrolment ratio, gender parity index and dropout rate at various levels. Some points have been given in the last part of this paper in order to overcome the upcoming challenges.

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INTRODUCTION

India has the largest concentration of tribal population in the world, except perhaps the African countries. The tribes live mostly in isolated villages or hamlets in various states. In India, they are equated with adivasi, who are primitive and live in hills and forests. 'Adivasi' means the original inhabitants of India. In Sanskrit, the word *atavika* means forest dwellers or *vanavasi*, which closely refers to adivasi. They are scattered all over the country and differ from each other in racial traits, social organisation, cultural pattern, etc. Most of the tribal communities have their own dialects, most of them without a script. More than 90 per cent of Scheduled Tribe workers are engaged in the primary sector or sector of the economy related to the exploitation of natural resources. In view of their socio-economic backwardness, geographical isolation and marginalisation, the Constitution of India has incorporated specific provisions for promoting and safeguarding the interests of tribals. Article 46 of the Constitution envisages that, "The state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the Scheduled Tribes and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation." There are further provisions in Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution for affirmative State actions in their favour.

At present, there are nearly 645 tribal groups, which constitute

8.6 per cent of India's total population (2011 Census). Nearly three-fourth of India's Scheduled Tribe population is concentrated in seven states in Central India i.e., Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. In comparison to other states, Odisha has the highest percentage of tribal population next only to Assam in terms of various economic gradations, ethnic stock and linguistic families.

A PROFILE OF ODISHA

Odisha occupies a prominent place on the tribal map of India as it consists of one of the largest varieties of Scheduled Tribe communities. As far as the geographical location of Odisha is concerned, West Bengal in the North East, Jharkhand in North, Andhra Pradesh in South, Chhattisgarh in West and the Bay of Bengal on East surround the state, which is located on the east coast of India. It lies between 17.48° and 22.34° North latitude and 81.24° and 87.29° East longitude. In the past, Odisha was famous as Kalinga, Koshala, Udra and Utkal. All these regions became one and a separate state — Odisha — on 1 April 1936 under the Government of India Act, 1936. It has an area of 155,707 sq. km. i.e., 4.74 per cent of India's land. Odisha is not a homogeneous area due to its mountainous terrain and combined action of its major rivers

(such as Budhabalanga, Baitarani, Brahmani, Mahanadi and Rushikulya) and their tributaries. It has a limited area of lower elevations, while about three-fourth of its land surface is hilly and mountainous. It has some narrow river valleys and a few major uplands and subdued plateaus. Odisha now comprises 30 districts and several administrative units with a total population of 36,804,660 according to the 2001 Census and 41,947,358 as per the 2011 Census report. According to the 2001 Census, the Scheduled Tribe population of the state was 8,145,081, which constituted 8.08 per cent of the total population of the country and 22.13 per cent of the total population of the state. As per the 2011 Census, Scheduled Tribes constitute 22.8 per cent of the total population of the state.

SCHEDULED TRIBE POPULATION OF ODISHA

Odisha is regarded as the homeland of tribes. The tribal population is scattered throughout the state but density is more in southern, western and northern districts. They are found to be thickly concentrated in the districts of Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh, Nayagarh, Nawrangpur, Malkangiri, Keonjhar, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Gajapati, Koraput, Nuapada, Balangir and very sparsely distributed in Cuttack, Kendrapara, Puri, Jajpur. Most of them have

been living in hilly and forest regions. Their economy is largely subsistence-oriented, non-stratified and non-specialised. Their social system is simple and aspirations and needs are not many. Though the Scheduled Tribes in Odisha have suffered social, educational and economic backwardness due to geo-historical reasons, they have their own distinctiveness and social-cultural milieu. The process of socio-economic development has been going on after Independence and has picked up momentum. Their ethos, ideology, worldview, value-orientation and cultural heritage are rich and varied. At one end of the scale, there are nomadic food gatherers and hunters and at the other end, skilled settled agriculturists and horticulturists. The tribal areas of Odisha, therefore, present a diverse socio-economic panorama.

There are 62 tribes in the state, who speak as many as 74 dialects. Of these, 14 major tribes have a distinct culture of their own and belong to separate racial and linguistic groups. They are Kandha, Gond, Savara, Munda, Godaba, Kolha, Oraon, Kissan, Santal, Paraja, Koya, Bhillyon, Juang and Bonda. Apart from these tribes, others like Korwas, Birhor and hill Kharies also live here. Each tribe possesses a distinct identity in terms of social organisation, culture, language, customs and traditions.

Table 1
Scheduled Tribe Population of Odisha and Sex Ratio (1961–2011)

Census Year	Tribal Population	Tribal Sex Ratio
1961	4,223,757	1,016
1971	5,071,937	1,007
1981	5,915,067	1,012
1991	7,032,214	1,002
2001	8,145,081	1,003
2011	9,590,756	1,029

Source: Census Of India

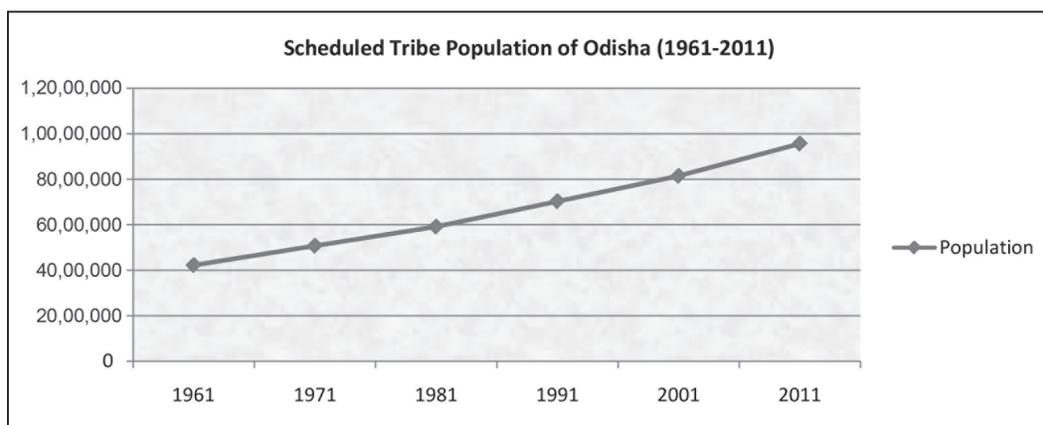


Figure 1

The population of Scheduled Tribes in Odisha consistently increased from 1961 to 2011 (Table 1). An analysis indicates that the Scheduled Tribes population of 2011 increased approximately more than two times compared to the population of 1961 Census. As far as the sex ratio is concerned, a fluctuating trend was reported

from 1961 to 2011. As per the 1961 Census, the sex ratio was 1,016 and it was 1,007 in 1971. Table 1 shows that the tribal sex ratio reached 1,012 in 1981, 1,002 in 1991, 1,003 in 2001 and finally 1,029 in 2011. As a whole, the sex ratio of Scheduled Tribes is better in matter of gender equality.

Table 2
Percentage of Schedule Tribes to Total Population of Odisha (2001–2011)

Census Year	Rural	Urban	Total
2001	24.6	8.1	22.1
2011	25.7	8.5	22.8

Table 2 shows the percentage of rural and urban Scheduled Tribe population in Odisha. As per the 2001 Census, the total Scheduled Tribe population was 22.1 per cent, which includes 24.6 per cent and 8.1 per cent of rural and urban Scheduled Tribes population, respectively.

However, by the census year 2011, the overall Scheduled Tribes population reached 22.8 per cent, which includes 25.7 per cent rural and 8.5 urban population. A comparison of Scheduled Tribe population of 2011 Census with 2001 Census revealed that within a decade, there has been an increase of 0.7 per cent. Among rural Scheduled Tribes, the percentage of population went up from 24.6 to 25.7 per cent and among urban Scheduled Tribes it went up from 8.1 to 8.5 per cent for the same period.

This shows the steady increase of Scheduled Tribes' population

in rural areas compared to urban areas within a decade.

EDUCATION OF THE SCHEDULED TRIBES

Education has been assigned high priority among the national objectives in India. It has been widely accepted that education is a necessary tool for the attainment of developmental goals. Realising the importance of education for a large, democratic and welfare country like India, the Constitution enshrines certain provisions promising equal educational opportunities to all. In pursuance of these provisions, the State and Central governments have given attention to the promotion of education among all categories, in general, and socially and culturally disadvantaged groups, in particular. Despite incentives for the development of education among the tribes, the progress of educational development is still far from expectation.

Table 3
Overall Literacy and Scheduled Tribes Literacy of Odisha

Census Year	Percentage of Literacy		Literacy Gap
	Total	Scheduled Tribes	
1961	21.66	07.36	14.30
1971	26.18	09.46	16.72

1981	34.23	13.96	20.27
1991	49.09	22.31	26.78
2001	63.08	37.37	25.71
2011	73.45	52.2	21.25

* *Census of India, 1961–2011*

The tribal disparity in literacy had steadily increased from 1961 to 1991 (Table 3); and it registered a marginal decrease in the census years 2001 and 2011. The tribal literacy was about 25 per cent less than the overall literacy in most census years.

Literacy and education are pre-requisites for the quality of resources to any society. Improvement in the level of these indicators reflects development in a society. The rate of literacy among Scheduled Tribes was 52.2 per cent against the overall rate of 73.45 per cent in the state as per the 2011 Census (Table 4). The tribal male and female literacy rates were 63.7 and 41.2 per cent, respectively. Over the last six decades, there has

been a significant improvement in the literacy level among Scheduled Tribes in Odisha, which recorded a jump from 7.36 per cent in 1961 to 52.2 per cent in 2011. As per the 1961 Census, literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes was 7.36 per cent, against the overall 21.66 per cent, of the state. However, it may be noted that literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes population has consistently increased during the last six decades.

An overall analysis of Scheduled Tribes literacy rate to the total figure reveals that there is a great disparity in the literacy rate of general and tribal population. A conspicuous gender inequality in the literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes students has

Table 4
Gender Gap in Literacy Rate of Scheduled Tribes Population of Odisha (in %)

Census year				
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Gender Gap</i>
1961	7.36	13.04	1.77	11.27
1971	9.46	16.30	2.58	13.72
1981	13.96	23.27	4.76	18.51
1991	22.31	34.44	10.21	24.23
2001	37.37	51.48	23.37	28.11
2011	52.2	63.7	41.2	22.5

* *Census of India, 1961–2011*

been observed. It is evident from Table 4 that in 1961 the literacy rate of males was 13.04 per cent. However, literacy rate of females was only 1.77 per cent. Similarly, in 1971 the corresponding values were 16.30 and 2.58 per cent, respectively. In 1981, it was 23.27 and 4.76 per cent; in 1991, the literacy rate of males and females was 34.44 and 10.21 per cent, respectively; in 2001, it was 51.48 and 23.37 per cent and in the census year 2011 it was found that the literacy rate of males and females was 63.7 and 41.2 per cent, respectively. It is pertinent to note that the literacy rate of both males and females shows an increasing trend from 1961 to 2011. However, gender gap in the literacy rate has not been reduced during these periods. As far as male literacy is

concerned, it rose from 13.04 per cent in 1961 to 63.7 per cent in 2011. The corresponding figures for females were 1.77 and 41.2 per cent, respectively. It is disheartening to note that the overall literacy rate has increased within six decades but the gender gap has not decreased as per the expectations, which has widened gender inequality in society.

Table 5 shows the enrolment of Scheduled Tribe students in primary, middle and secondary levels of school. The year-wise analysis provides a mixed picture of growth and decline of students' enrolment. In 2006-07, the total enrolment at the primary stage was 1,276,045. During the subsequent years a mixed trend was observed and by 2010-11 enrolment was 1,338,732. As far the enrolment in middle and secondary levels is

Table 5
Enrolment of Scheduled Tribe Boys and Girls at Different Stages of School Education

Year	Primary (Class I-V)			Middle (Class VI-VIII)			Secondary (Class IX-X)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2006-07	677,503 (53.09)	598,542 (46.91)	1,276,045 (100)	186,409 (57.44)	138,101 (42.56)	324,510 (100)	62,240 (57.71)	45,598 (42.29)	107,838 (100)
2007-08	639,338 (51.15)	610,648 (48.85)	1,249,986 (100)	193,073 (55.75)	153,227 (44.25)	346,300 (100)	63,482 (57.95)	46,042 (42.05)	109,524 (100)
2008-09	685,134 (51.06)	656,627 (48.94)	1,341,761 (100)	208,880 (55.22)	169,381 (44.78)	378,261 (100)	66,557 (57.67)	48,852 (42.33)	115,409 (100)
2009-10	679,605 (51.07)	650,906 (48.93)	1,330,511 (100)	213,371 (54.29)	179,644 (45.71)	393,015 (100)	72,991 (55.65)	58,171 (44.35)	131,162 (100)
2010-11	684,634 (51.14)	654,098 (48.86)	1,338,732 (100)	210,031 (53.18)	184,846 (46.82)	394,877 (100)	79,148 (53.74)	68,134 (46.26)	147,282 (100)

Source: *Statistics of School Education, Government of India*

**Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage.*

concerned, a consistently increasing trend was observed in both the cases during 2006-07 to 2010-11. In 2006-07, the total enrolment was 324,510 and 107,838 at middle and secondary levels, respectively. During the subsequent years, an increasing trend was observed and by 2010-11 the corresponding figures were 394,877 and 147,282 at the two stages of schooling, respectively.

Further analysis indicates the gender-wise enrolment of Scheduled Tribe students in three stages of school education. It is evident from the table that at the primary stage in the year 2006-07, out of 1,276,045 students, 677,503 were boys and 598,542 were girls, which accounted to 53.09 per cent and 46.91 per cent, respectively. In the successive years, a slight change was observed and finally, in 2010-11, the percentage of enrolment of boys and girls was 51.14 and 48.86 per cent, respectively. The analysis of the percentage of enrolment of boys and girls revealed that the participation of girls had

increased slightly in the successive years at primary stages of schooling. At the middle stage in 2006-07, the percentage of enrolment of boys and girls was 57.44 and 42.56 per cent, respectively. In the successive years, the percentage of girls increased and by 2010-11, the percentage of enrolment of boys and girls was 53.18 and 46.82 per cent, respectively. As far as the percentage of enrolment of boys and girls at the secondary level is concerned, in 2006-07, it was reported to be 57.71 per cent and 42.29 per cent, respectively, and by 2010-11, the corresponding figures were 53.74 and 46.26 per cent for boys and girls, respectively. An overall analysis in the increase of enrolment of Scheduled Tribe students in all stages of school education indicates not only larger enrolment of boys and girls but also greater retention of Scheduled Tribe students at all levels of school education. This is a positive trend as far as the education of Scheduled Tribes is concerned.

Table 6
Gross Enrolment Ratio of Scheduled Tribe Students (2006-07 to 2010-11)

Year	Primary (Class I-V)			Middle (Class VI-VIII)			Secondary (Class IX-X)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2006-07	129.84	122.28	126.18	66.21	52.18	59.41	33.82	26.99	30.55
2007-08	124.63	127.22	125.88	69.45	58.71	64.25	34.69	27.41	31.20
2008-09	130.0	133.8	131.8	75.4	65.2	70.5	36.57	29.43	33.16
2009-10	130.40	134.74	132.48	77.73	69.84	73.91	39.85	34.69	37.38
2010-11	132.7	137.4	135.0	77.1	72.5	74.9	43.20	40.70	42.10

Source: *Statistics of School Education, Government of India*

Table 6 shows the gross enrolment ratio (GER) of Schedule Tribe students from 2006-07 to 2010-11. It is evident from the table that there has been good progress in the matter of enrolment in the schools. In 2006-07, the GER of Scheduled Tribe children was 126.18 at primary level, 59.41 at middle level and 30.55 at secondary level. It was found that the GER had increased in all levels from 2006-07 to 2010-11. In 2010-11, it rose to 135, 74.9 and 42.1 at the primary, middle and secondary level, respectively. The GER above hundred indicates the presence of a large number of over-aged children in respective age of schooling. Late enrolment in school and stagnation generally account for the presence of over-aged children in schools. The presence of over-aged children, therefore, is in some way an indication of relative educational backwardness of the Scheduled Tribe population.

Another index to measure gender inequality in schooling is the

number of girls per hundred boys enrolled in schools. Table 7 shows that although gender disparity in the schooling of Scheduled Tribe children still exists, there has been a substantial improvement in narrowing down the gap between boys and girls in school enrolment during 2006-11. In 2006-07, the number of girls was 88, 74 and 73 for primary, upper primary and secondary stages of education, respectively. In 2010-11, the corresponding figures were 96, 98 and 86 at the three stages of schooling, respectively. As far as the year-wise analysis is concerned, at the primary level 88 girls were enrolled in 2006-07 and it went up to 96 in 2010-11. Similarly, at the upper primary level, 74 girls were enrolled in 2006-07 and it reached 98 by 2010-11. As far as the secondary level is concerned, it was 73 girls in 2006-07 and 86 in 2010-11. This indicates that there is a positive trend in the enrolment of tribal girls in all stages of school education.

Table 7
Number of Scheduled Tribe Girls per Hundred Boys at Different Stages of School Education (2006-07 to 2010-11)

Year	Primary (Class I-V)	Upper Primary (Class VI-VIII)	Secondary (Class IX-X)
2006-07	88	74	73
2007-08	96	79	73
2008-09	96	81	73
2009-10	96	84	80
2010-11	96	98	86

Source: *Statistics of School Education, Government of India*

Table 8
Gender Parity Index of Scheduled Tribe Students at School Education
(2006-07 to 2010-11)

S. No.	Academic Year	Primary (Class I-V)	Upper primary (Class VI-VIII)	Secondary (Class IX-X)
1	2006-07	0.94	0.79	0.80
2	2007-08	1.02	0.85	0.79
3	2008-09	1.03	0.86	0.79
4	2009-10	1.03	0.90	0.87
5	2010-11	1.04	0.94	0.94

Source: *Statistics of School Education, Government of India*

Gender Parity Index (GPI) is yet another measure of gender equality in education. It is evident from Table 8 that in all years the GPI of primary level is much higher than that of upper primary and secondary levels. In 2006-07, the GPI was 0.94, 0.79, and 0.80 at the primary, upper primary and secondary stages, respectively. While in 2010-11, the corresponding figures were 1.04, 0.94 and 0.94 at the three stages of schooling, respectively. These findings probably indicate a higher rate of dropout among Scheduled

Tribe girls after the primary stage of education compared to boys. As far as the year-wise GPI is concerned, it was observed that there has been a definite rise from 2006-07 to 2010-11 at all levels of school education. The increase has been from 0.94 to 1.04 at primary, from 0.79 to 0.94 at upper primary and from 0.8 to 0.94 at the secondary level from 2006-07 to 2010-11. The findings also indicate a positive trend towards gender equality in successive years among Scheduled Tribe students, although inequality still persists.

Table 9
Dropout Rate of Scheduled Tribe Boys and Girls in School Education
(Classes I-X)

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
2006-07	85.21	83.41	84.52
2007-08	85.55	83.58	84.79
2008-09	86.19	85.19	85.78
2008-10	86.08	85.13	85.68
2010-11	86.40	84.50	85.60

Source: *Statistics of School Education, Government of India*

It was found that the dropout rate from Classes I-X varied from 84.52 per cent to 85.78 per cent during the assessment period. Dropout rate increased in the successive years and was the highest i.e., 85.78 per cent in 2008-09. The findings revealed that out of every 100 Scheduled Tribe children enrolled in Class I, only 14 to 15 could reach Class X. Another observation indicates that the dropout rate of Scheduled Tribe boys is higher compared to girls. The dropout rate of boys was 85.21, 85.55, 86.19, 86.08 and 86.40 per cent in 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, respectively. However, in the corresponding years, the dropout rate of girls was 83.41, 83.58, 85.19, 85.13 and 84.50 per cent, respectively. The high dropout rate could be attributed to poor socio-economic condition of the family. In addition to that, poverty, inaccessibility to school, inadequate school infrastructure, ignorance and low emphasis on education may be some of the reasons for high dropout of Scheduled Tribe children in different stages of school education.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Education of Scheduled Tribe cannot be left to short-term plans. It is important that planners take a long-term view which is embedded in a meaningful policy framework. Following are some important points emerging from the analysis.

- Emphasis should be on quality and equality rather than quantity
- as has been the case in the past. The prime focus should be on the provision of quality education that makes tribal communities economically effective and independent.
- In the tribal context, it is essential that the school schedule be prepared as per the local requirement, rather than following a directive from the state as it has been found that vacations and holidays are planned without taking into consideration the local contexts.
 - Though it has been highlighted time and again, no concrete step has been taken to provide locally relevant materials to tribal students. Availability of locally relevant materials will not only facilitate faster learning but also help children develop a sense of affiliation to school.
 - In order to make education effective and sustainable, building partnerships between the community and the government is important. Results from pilot projects in various states show that community partnerships not only augment state expenditure on education but also guarantee supervision and monitoring, thus, addressing an intractable problem for the state.
 - Environment building is of immense importance in the context of educational development among tribal communities. Community awareness and community

mobilisation, which are its core elements, should receive adequate importance and attention.

- Decentralisation of education management is another aspect that needs special consideration in the context of tribal areas. In fact, considering the geographical terrain and communication problems in tribal areas, it is crucial to restructure the existing system of educational management. Adaptation of structures such as school complexes and VECs to tribal areas needs careful consideration.
- Skill development, competency building and teachers' motivation also need to be strengthened for sustaining educational development. Teachers should be made the centre of educational transformation and therefore, must remain the primary facilitators.

CONCLUSION

Education of tribals is an important task before the nation. Unfortunately, the literacy rate of the tribal population is very low. It has been observed that the extent and pace of education has also remained slow among tribals. The reasons for this can be categorised as external, internal, socio-economic and psychological. The external constraints are related to problems and difficulties at the policy level, planning, implementation

and at the administrative level. Internal constraints refer to problems related to the school system, content, curriculum, and medium of instruction, pedagogy, teacher-related problems, academic supervision and monitoring. The third set of problems is related to social, economic and cultural background of tribal and the psychological problems of first-generation learners. The state literacy rate of scheduled tribes, according to the 2011 Census, is 52.2 per cent, which is much lower than the overall 73.45 per cent. Therefore, an educational plan for such a vast group of individuals should aim at educating all its members in the school-going age-group. Education is, in fact, an input not only for the economic development of tribes but also for the inner strength of tribal communities. It also helps them face the new challenges of life. Education of Scheduled Tribe children is considered important not only because of constitutional obligation but also as a crucial input for the all-round development of tribal communities. Careful educational planning and mapping are required for developing among tribal children the habit of attending schools regularly. This will solve the problems of attendance, achievement, retention and dropouts of Scheduled Tribe children.

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